

A
FULL ACCOUNT
OF THE
RIOTS AT BRISTOL,
ON THE
THREE LAST DAYS
OF
OCTOBER, 1831.

COMMUNICATED BY A FRIEND.



Montreal:
PRINTED BY GEORGE PERKINS HULL,
No. 19, St. Paul Street.
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On the three last days of October, 1831.

ON Saturday, the 29th of October, 1831, the opening of the Commission of Assize was appointed to take place at Bristol, in the usual form. By a very Ancient Charter this solemn Court of Justice must be held by the Recorder, who is to be a skilful and experienced lawyer, together with the Magistrates of the city. The Gaol contained upwards of one hundred prisoners, committed for various crimes and misdemeanours, who were to be tried by Sir Charles Wetherell, the Recorder, as Chief Judge.

Sir Charles is also a member of Parliament, and in his place in the House of Commons, he opposed the passing of the Reform Bill, the great political question of the day. In county, and town, and village, there had been public meetings, and long and fiery speeches; the press, the powerful press applied its mighty lever to the work, and petition after petition travelled to London, in favour of "the Bill." If they would honestly confess it, I believe very many were all alive about the passing of the Bill, who like myself had no very clear notions as to what it meant, or what reason there was to expect such great things from it. The Bill, or some bill will pass one day I suppose, and I am content to let Old Time settle the point. You and I, have lived long enough, to see several "great questions" agitated, with vast promise of good to the country, more especially to the labouring classes. The grand consideration, however, must be, whether

the people are more industrious, and frugal, and quiet, and happy, than they were in our recollection, or in your good Father's time; for the *substantial* happiness of the people is the end of good government. Of this, at least, I am certain, that how good soever the end proposed may be conceived to be, the means employed to attain it by unprincipled men are often bad in the extreme. They have their own base and selfish purposes to serve, and the best that can be said of them is, that they are of those that say, "let us do evil that good may come;" and to such as do so, St. Paul gives a hard blow in Rom. iii. 8. Fair promises are held out of a new and improved political system, bringing smiling peace and plenty in its train. Meanwhile the country is kept in a hubbub, and the working man idle, losing his wages. The doctrines, and principles, and advice, urged upon him in newspapers, political registers, and the low publications of the infidel press, lead him to neglect and despise the important and truly honourable duties of his humble sphere, in the faithful discharge of which consists his own solid happiness and the prosperity of the nation at large. He is flattered and cajoled into the conceit that his chief and proper business is to meddle in politics and elections; in making laws and governing, instead of plying his trade, obeying the laws, and enjoying their protection. The lowest ale house politician who figures in a Bristol riot, is lifted to the same pinnacle with the peer of the realm; and while those necessary and useful distinctions of rank and property which naturally grow with the growth of every well-ordered state are set at naught, so also are differences of character. The wisest and best men are put on the same level with the most ignorant and most profligate. Such are the doctrines industriously spread by the wicked mercenary venders of treason and blasphemy, and broached in periodicals of a higher grade.

I read not long since of a curious experiment in gardening. The trial was made with a species of willow.—The plant was pulled up, its topmost bran-

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ches were placed in the ground, and the roots upwards. Such were the wonderful efforts of nature to support it in this unsightly and unnatural position, that the sapling, after a while struck root, and put forth a few stripling branches. These knaves would have it, that the strong and stately British oak can only flourish after the same fashion. The labouring classes, are the roots that draw nourishment from the mother earth, and fix the noble stem immoveable. Without them it could not put forth its spreading boughs covered with the leaves of summer. Nor are they so only for glory and for beauty. They receive the air and light, the dew and rain of heaven; they pour the vital sap to return through the tree down to the roots again. All are useful; all are beautiful in the situation appointed them by the all-wise Creator. The levellers and revolutionists say that the tree would flourish better if laid prostrate on the ground, or turned topsy-turvy.

It was well known that some of these mischievous spirits were actively at work before the time fixed for the gaol delivery in Bristol. I have heard, that there are at least eight depositories for infidel and treasonable tracts in different quarters are held, at which the members, afraid to trust each other, if not ashamed of themselves, attend in masks. I have seen some of their tracts printed in the usual way, or on pocket handkerchiefs, for greater durability: and the sight of the deadly moral poison made my blood run cold. Traitors and infidels well know this. Divine truth, "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness." In plotting mischief they begin by providing means to corrupt the hearts of the people.

The propounders of the modern political doctrines were not idle.

The following placard was issued:—

"The Council of the Union have heard with feelings of surprise, that the Corporation have requested and obtained the aid

assistance of armed troops, for the purpose of conducting Sir Chas. Wetherell, in his judicial capacity, into this city. It is the opinion of this Council that if the magistracy of this city *feel themselves incompetent to preserve* the public peace without being supported by the military, *that they should resign their offices*, and suffer the civic authorities to be elected by a majority of the votes of their fellow-citizens. *The Council think that a man clothed in the robes of magistracy might never to be a politician*, as such a magistrate cannot be expected to possess the public confidence, without which he will always be found incompetent to preserve the public peace. They would, therefore, *recommend* to the Corporation the *immediate resignation* of Sir C. Wetherell, as recorder, such being the means best calculated *to prevent riot and perhaps bloodshed*. At the same time the Council most earnestly recommend members of the Union, and reformers in general, at all times of popular excitement, to use their most strenuous endeavours for the preservation of the public peace, as it is only by such a course they will be able to obtain the rights they seek."

Oct. 25, 1831.

Political Unions have since been declared unlawful by a Royal Proclamation, and are alluded to in the King's late Speech at the opening of Parliament, as combinations which in their "form and character are incompatible with all regular government, and are equally opposed to the spirit and to the provisions of the law." I shall therefore make free to remark upon this manifesto, as calculated to cause the riots it pretended to dissuade from. Can any honest sensible man read it, and not see through the thin disguise? The magistrates are represented as unfit for their offices. They ought to resign that others may be elected by the votes of their fellow-citizens. Surely members of the Political Union did not mean to supplant them, for they are Politicians! and a "man clothed in the robes of magistracy ought never to be a politician!" Sir Charles Wetherell, a member of Parliament, who expresses his opinions in one way as the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack does in another way, is disqualified, say they, from being a magistrate and judge. The maxim of the authors of the placard would certainly go to exclude many whom they would not wish to exclude, and themselves also. However, these politicians do not hesitate to take upon themselves the duties of magistrates, for they

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dictate a sitting in Council, what is, and what is not to be done. "Soldiers ought not to be in readiness in case of riot. The Judge appointed by the King is unfit for his office, and so are the magistrates. We recommend them to resign immediately." If the advice was good, it might have been "recommended" privately. To post it on the walls was to advertise the soldiers to endeavour to make the Recorder and the magistrates publicly obnoxious and contemptible, and to provoke "the riot and perhaps bloodshed" which "the Council of the Union" predicted. This was adding fuel to the flame. "As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife."—(Proverbs.)

A communication having previously been made to Sir Chas. Wetherell and to the Secretary of State in London, as to the state of public feeling, it was nevertheless determined that the administration of justice should proceed in its regular course. Some soldiers were sent to the neighbourhood lest the civil force should prove insufficient to keep the peace. Two troops of the 14th Light Dragoons were quartered at Clifton, and one troop of the 3rd Dragoon Guards at Keynsham; in all about seventy men, to be employed only in case of necessity.

On Thursday the 27th the magistrates published the following address:—

It being apprehended from information received through various channels, that some indiscreet persons may be inclined to promote feelings of irritation and excitement on the arrival of the Recorder in this city, the Mayor and Aldermen most earnestly hope that all classes of their fellow citizens, *however they may differ on political subjects, will see the propriety of cordially co-operating to maintain peace and good order*; and that they will abstain from manifesting any declaration of their opinions on so solemn and important an occasion as the delivery of His Majesty's Gaol, in cases affecting the lives of the persons to be tried for offences against the laws of their country. The Magistrates confidently hope that they may rely on the good sense and discretion of the inhabitants, not to depart from that orderly conduct which has hitherto prevailed in the city; but should any disposition be shewn, tending to create disturbance, they feel it will become their imperative duty to use all lawful means for the apprehending and bringing to punishment all persons who may be found committing any breach of the peace, or other illegal acts."

On the morning of the 29th the troops marched by the outskirts of the town into the court yard of the gaol and the interior of the cattle market, where they remained out of sight. Sir Charles Wetherell was met at half-past ten in the forenoon, about a mile from the Guildhall, by an escort, consisting as usual of the sheriffs and city officers. He was also attended by some gentlemen on horse-back who rode beside his carriage, and about three hundred constables. As he entered the town, he was followed by a considerable crowd, who hissed and hooted him, perfectly regardless that he came as the king's representative, bearing the sword of justice. Some stones were thrown at his carriage, and several respectable citizens who had enrolled themselves as special constables for his protection were hurt. These insults and outrages continued till the procession reached the guildhall. The commission was there opened in the usual form amid great noise and confusion. On leaving the guildhall the crowd, in greater numbers than before, followed, hissing and yelling and occasionally throwing stones, till the recorder entered the mansion house in safety about noon.

Soon after the arrival of Sir Charles Wetherell at the Mansion-House, about mid day, some thousands of the labouring classes assembled in Queen-Square. The rioters had several skirmishes with the constables. On one occasion, a body of them suddenly armed themselves with sticks from a pile of faggots on the neighbouring quay, and attacked the constables, but were quickly put to flight. In the course of the day a respectable citizen, one of the special constables, being separated from his party, was chased by the mob to the quay, and forced into the water; he very narrowly escaped by getting into a boat at some distance, and while swimming and struggling for his life, the unfeeling rioters watched him from the bank with shouts and laughter, as savages might have done.

About three o'clock, part of the constables were allowed to return home. Towards evening the crowd

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increased; and under cloud of night, the rioters grew bolder and more violent. The mayor attended by some of the magistrates, appeared in front of the Mansion-House and endeavoured by expostulation and entreaty, to prevail on them to go home, warning them of their danger, if by persisting in their criminal conduct he should be compelled to read the riot act. During this kind and conciliatory address, the mayor and those around him were assaulted with a shower of stones, by one of which the person next the mayor was severely hurt. At length the riot act was read, which declares that all persons assembling tumultuously are guilty of a capital felony, and may be punished with death; and messengers were despatched for the troops, which, till now had been kept in concealment. In the interval of more than half an hour, before their arrival, the mayor and those who were with him in the Mansion-House, were in the greatest personal danger. The people on the outside had driven in the constables, torn up the iron railings in front of the house, and with stones and large pieces of timber battered in the windows and window frames and the pannels of the doors; and were with the greatest difficulty prevented from forcing a complete entrance by barricading the windows and doors with beds and furniture; they had entered into the dining-room and another room on the ground floor, and destroyed the contents, and had made such a breach in the street door as enabled them to rake and sweep the hall with stones and large bars of wood; and they had, as it appears, provided and placed straw in the dining room, for the purpose of setting fire to the house. On the arrival of the soldiers, the people withdrew from the attack, but they shewed no signs of alarm, and received the soldiers with loud cheers.

Here was the Mansion House, the appointed dwelling place of the newly elected chief magistrate, a partial ruin, and only preserved by a guard of soldiers from entire destruction by the mob, who seemed eager to rush in, and dye their hands in blood. And

why? Because of the presence of a judge—an upright judge, (with his politics we have nothing to do) who with the honesty and boldness of an Englishman, had spoken his mind in the House of Commons; and whose arguments had been publicly sifted and replied to, and outvoted there, by a majority of the members. Was it like English fair play, or was it the work of the cowardly assassin, for such a cause as this, to insult a member of Parliament, a judge or any man; to pelt him, and break open the house where he was a guest, for speaking his mind as we have said? And what had the mayor done? It was his duty in the office he held, to treat the Recorder with hospitality. They were of opposite political sentiments, and the people knew it. Yet the rioters did not scruple to attack the mayor's person, to break open his house, and attempt to burn it about his ears; and if they could have forced their way into the room, where were the objects of their resentment, it is hardly to be doubted that the foulest murders would have been committed, in that moment of fury. The words tyrant and oppressor are for ever in their mouths. As you shall often hear the drunkard rail against drunkenness, the thief against dishonesty, so the men who keep up the hue and cry against tyranny and oppression, are themselves the greatest tyrants. To rule according to the laws is the Kingly office; to attempt to rule contrary to the laws and Constitution, is tyrannical, no doubt; but, since our Constitution was settled upon its present foundation a century and a half ago, and since the accession of the reigning family to the throne,—from such tyranny, we have happily been more free than any other nation in the world. Now, mark what a tyrant in grain, most that man be, whose duty is not to rule, but as a citizen, and subject, to obey the laws, to obey the magistrates, to “give honour to whom honour is due,” to “fear God, and honour the King,” but who flies in the face of one and all of these sacred duties, and strives with all his might to lord it over all ranks and conditions of men above him, not excepting Majesty itself?

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This is pride, this is *tyranny* with a vengeance. The envious toad puffing itself up with swelling words of vanity to the size of the ox. It may be said, perhaps, there is no great mischief in words. Read what St. James saith. "The tongue is a little member and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth. And the tongue is a fire—a world of iniquity; it setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell."

The "unruly evil of the tongue full of deadly poison," is fearfully manifest in the profane and treasonable pamphlets by which the people of England are insulted. Aye insulted,—for I am dishonoured by being appealed to as capable of the foulest crimes, assassination, treason, rebellion, and such like; spoken and written to, as if I were an Italian robber, or one of the disciples of the ferocious Robespierre, who was guilty in the first instance, of shedding royal blood, and afterwards became a tyrant, whose guillotines made the streets of Paris to flow with the blood of the people.

To return to our narrative, the whole of Queen Square was in darkness, the rioters having put out the lamps. In the large hall, the lamps were still burning, and through the shattered doors and window frames shewed distinctly the interior of the lower apartments, now filled with constables who had defended the staircase from the rioters. During the evening, Sir Charles Wetherell escaped by the roof, and soon afterwards left Bristol, as was publicly intimated next day at noon.

These disgraceful outrages having proceeded thus far, how ought they to have been checked? When ought the dragoons to have been ordered to charge? Whose duty was it to give the orders? These and other knotty questions it is understood will be solemnly investigated, and I intend to pass them over.

It is much to be feared and lamented, that up to this period, and beyond it, many of the labouring classes, who would have shrunk with horror from taking any part in a theft or house breaking, gave

encouragement directly or indirectly to those who had no such scruples?

Can it be supposed for a moment that because a *multitude* is engaged in a riot, only a fractional part of the crime falls to the share of each? Is it a trifling offence to stand secretly approving, to hiss, throw stones, break windows, or cheer on the ringleaders? It is those, who come from curiosity, or worse motives, and remain after the riot act has warned all respectable citizens to separate from the guilty, and go to their own homes; it is they who make a mob the dangerous thing it is. In mercy to them bloodshed is delayed so long, and the rioters are emboldened to commit the most daring outrages.

We are to resist the beginnings of evil. Now mark the origin of a riot. Here are envyings, variance, adululations, hatred, wrath, seditious, strife. Strife, which Solomon tells us, is like the letting out of water, and then it swells, and rages, and boils like a flood, in waves of tumult, drunkenness, revellings, and such like. (See what St. Paul says of them who do such things, Gal. v. 19-21.) A riot is directly contrary in all respects to the peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance, and love, which are the fulfilling of the divine law. A riot defies all human law and authority, and God's solemn ordinance. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God, whosoever, therefore *resisteth* the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that *resist* shall receive to themselves damnation." For he beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore, ye must needs be subject not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake." (Rom. xiii.) Again, the same inspired Apostle writes, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the KING as supreme, or unto GOVERNORS, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well. (1. Pet. ii. 13-14.)

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and Governors is thus clearly pointed out in the New Testament, some of the most terrible judgments recorded in the Old Testament scriptures were inflicted on the Israelites for sedition and rebellion. With a new and terrible judgment, God visited Korah and his company when "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and they and all that appertained to them went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation." And on the morrow when all the congregation murmured against Moses and Aaron and were gathered against them, wrath went out from the Lord "to consume them as in a moment;" wrath which could only be appeased by the atoning sacrifice which Aaron was commanded to offer, as a type of the great High Priest, Christ Jesus, who was to come and offer himself, the one great sacrifice for sin. But, before the plague was stayed, and while Aaron stood between the dead and the living, holding the censer of incense, fourteen thousand seven hundred persons died of the plague beside them that died in the matter of Korah. If, under the Christian dispensation, it has not been the ordinary course of Divine Providence to inflict temporal judgments for particular offences in so signal and marked a manner; yet "the Lord will reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment, to be punished," (2 Pet. ii.) and who does the Apostle proceed to tell us shall be the chief criminals, the *ringleaders*, so to 'speak' at the great and solemn day, "*Chiefly, them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, that despise government, presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.* But as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish, in their own corruption" Infidelity and sedition, atheism and treason, go hand in hand. In the nature of things it must be so. Men that honour not the King and obey not their Governors, who are divinely ordained, cannot fear Him by whom they were ordained. Because the Bible condemns them

they shut their eyes against its heavenly light, which exposes their evil deeds; they strive to spread the fatal delusion, and to make their own darkness universal.

During the remainder of Saturday night, the mob continued in front of the Mansion-House, but besides occasionally molesting the soldiers, they were not guilty of any further outrages there. The dragoons were ordered to draw their swords, with the sides and backs of which, they dealt them some hard blows. About midnight the rioters went in a body to the Council House, and smashed the windows. The cavalry pursued and charged them, which they returned by showers of stones from the corners of the streets and lanes. At the top of the Pithay, (a steep narrow lane,) having struck one of the 14th Dragoons, the soldier turned, and shot a man who is believed to have been unconcerned in the riots; no other lives were lost.

Amidst such scenes of tumult was the morning of the Lord's day ushered in. These wicked disturbers of its peace were at length driven from the streets, and they retired to plot further mischief on their beds.

What a miserable contrast was this to the peaceful happy close of the week, so beautifully described in the "Cotter's Saturday Night," by the favourite poet of Scotland, whose strong pathetic genius always true to nature, has given in that poem such a picture of his own home, as must lead us to lament that his pen was often employed far more unworthily.

The toil worn cotter free his labour goes,
This night, his weekly toil is at an end,
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,
 Hoping the morn in rest and ease to spend,
 And weary o'er the moor, his course does home-ward bend.

The cheerful supper done, with serious face
 They round the ingle form a circle wide,
 The sire turns o'er wi' patriarchal grace,
 The big ha' Bible, once his father's pride;
 His bonnet reverently is laid aside.

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Then kneeling down, to HEAV'N'S ETERNAL KING,
The *saint*, the *father*, and the *husband* prays;
Hope springs exulting on triumphant wing,
That *thus*, they all shall meet in future days:
There ever bask in uncreated rays,
No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,
Together hymning their Creator's praise,
In such society, yet still more dear,
While circling time moves round in an eternal sphere.

Then homeward all take off their sev'ral way;
The youngling cottagers retire to rest;
The parent pair, their secret homage pay,
And proffer up to heaven the warm request,
That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,
And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,
Would, in the way his wisdom sees the best,
For them, and for their little ones provide;
But chiefly, in their hearts with *grace divine* preside.

Let us hope that such simple and happy scenes are not unfrequent now-a-days in the homes of our cottagers; and that in our crowded towns, there are many families where devotion sheds its holy calm on the closing day, in the midst of surrounding profligacy. But domestic happiness and contentment must be rare, where the ale house frequently lures the labouring man from his home, where political registers and Sunday newspapers take the place of the Bible, teaching him to neglect his cheerful fire-side, his wife, and children, and make him discontented with himself and with every thing, and every body around him.

Long before the Sabbath bells had rung their hal-
lowed summons to the house of God, a prayerless
multitude, unwashed, clad in the dirty garments of
yesterday, and with hands and hearts still more im-
pure, came to the half ruined Mansion house, to
rejoice over the destruction they had caused, and
watch an opportunity for further violence. The
picquet of dragoons was withdrawn to take refresh-
ment, when the mob immediately renewed their at-
tack on the building. The mayor, several gentlemen,
and some constables, who were within, in all eight or
ten persons, had just time to escape over the roofs of

the adjoining houses, when the rioters rushed into all the rooms, threw out the furniture into the street, and destroyed or carried away clothes, linen, china, and every article of value. The cellars were forced open, casks of wine were staved, and bottles broken and emptied of their contents. The flooring and area flowed with the intoxicating liquors. Now, an abandoned crew of men and women were seen, some carrying off stolen property, others struggling greedily for wine and spirits. The drunkards staggered and reeled about the pavement, or lay along in senseless stupefaction, from which many never awoke again to the light of life; but, ah! inconceivable woe! sunk with a load of unrepented guilt, into the blackness of darkness for ever.

The picquet of the 14th dragoons quickly returned. The mob now inflamed with liquor, and seeking to revenge the death of the man who had been killed on the preceding night, attacked them with stones. As they had no orders to fire or use their sabres, the officer again withdrew them to their quarters. While they slowly retired along the Quay and Drawbridge, a number of the mob followed, and pelted them with stones and brickbats. The church bells were ringing for morning service; their peaceful chime above the angry shouts of the multitude, seemed to bid them cease their strife, and calm their raging passions. But these Sabbath-breakers, these drunkards, these rioters, heeded not. The soldiers who had borne their insults and violence all night long, bore it patiently still. They passed the drawbridge, and on the ascent to College-green, almost every stone from their pursuers fell within the line. The soldiers in the rear, hurt and provoked beyond endurance, turned and fired in self defence. Again and again they fired. A man fell, and was carried away dying. The mob, nothing daunted, followed them through College-green to their quarters, the dragoons firing the carbines at intervals, as the showers of stones were repeated. Seven or eight rioters, and a spectator on the opposite side of the Quay, were wounded. On

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their to church many persons witnessed this encoun-
ter who had never seen the military more seriously
engaged, than in the show and martial pride of a
field day. The stern features of war, and of civil
discord still more horrible, were strange and appalling
to them. It was a striking change to go from this
scene of confusion and bloodshed, with agitated feel-
ings, into one of the churches just so far distant as to
be undisturbed by it, where a large congregation
were assembled for prayer; and the deep stillness
was only broken by the organ's solemn strain, or
some words of peace from the lips of God's minister,
falling on the ear, like oil upon the troubled waves,
telling of mercy even to the chief of sinners. "When
the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness
that he hath committed, and doeth that which is law-
ful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Surely
this was no faint emblem of the last moments of the
sincere christian, when his ear has closed for ever on
the din and strife of this world, and his soul enter-
ing on the rest that remaineth for the people of God,
awakes to the rapturous notes of the seraphim, and
the praises of the heavenly host.

The commanding officer of the district soon after
this skirmish with the rioters, ordered the 14th light
dragoons, to remove to quarters at Keynstam, a vil-
lage on the Bath road, five miles from Bristol; an
order which they obeyed very unwillingly. He
hoped by this concession to induce the mob to return
to their homes, which he exhorted them to do.

The whole military force that now remained to pro-
tect the city, were twenty three soldiers of the 3rd
dragoon guards, who were stationed before the Man-
sion-house. These soldiers never having fired at the
mob, were received every where with cheers which
they returned by waving their hands and other de-
monstrations of good-will; when they afterwards
received decisive orders to charge and cut down the
rioters, they obeyed promptly, and acted with the
greatest spirit.

In all these disturbances, a band of loose and profl.

gate fellows, and some worthless boys, who acted as they were moved by others, on the spur of the moment, were seen to take a part, as mischievously busy, as at other times such vagabonds are idle, when useful work is to be done;

“ For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.”

These however were only the wretched dupes of deep designing villains; men of sharper intellects, who planned and directed what was to be done, darkly moved behind the scene of confusion and ruin they had created, and then skulked away, leaving the victims of the crafty plot to perish in their drunken revelry by fire and sword.

Having got rid of the greater part of the troops, the rioters grew colder, and before the respectable part of the inhabitants had returned from public worship, they planned an attack on the crowded gaol and proceeded to put it into execution. The objects of this wicked design were to inspire terror and increase the confusion; to procure as accomplices men hardened in crime, and ready to go with them to any excesses; and to defeat the ends of justice by liberating the prisoners that were to be tried by Sir Charles Wetherell. Bridewell was the first point of attack. On their way thither, the mob were made to halt and break open an anchorsmith's and ironmonger's shop; sledgehammers, crowbars, and other instruments were handed out and distributed in an orderly and systematic manner. With these formidable weapons, the unresisted mob quickly took the strong heavy prison gates off their hinges, and threw them into the float; they then battered off the locks and bars, let loose the prisoners, and set Bridewell on fire.

About the same time, (near by two o'clock) a large party of rioters attacked the new gaol, a strong building almost entirely built of massive stone and iron, which cost nearly one hundred thousand pounds. A very numerous and formidable mob ranged them-

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selves in front of the gaol, while all around, and on the opposite bank of the river, a multitude, computed at fifteen thousand persons, were gathered together, many from curiosity; but from the loud shouts of approbation from the crowd which rent the air from time to time as the rioters were forcing their way into the prison, it is but too evident that a very large number came to encourage by their presence and to assist them, if necessary. No due preparation had been made for the defence of this strong building; and to the suddenness and boldness of the attack, its success may in a great measure be ascribed.

Two magistrates, and about thirty citizens and constables, attempted to enter the prison, but were stoned and driven back. The rioters now forced their way into the governor's house, carried off the furniture, the prison books, the caravan, and the gallows, and threw them into the river. About this time, the hopes of the well disposed spectators were raised by the appearance of the twenty three dragoons, the only remaining defenders of the city; but they had no orders to attack the mob; and it would scarcely have been prudent to do so in a spot where their own retreat might have been cut off by burning the Prince's street bridge, along which they soon retired to their former station.

With the help of the prison keys found in the governor's house, and with their thundering sledge-hammers, the rioters quickly released the prisoners, about one hundred and seventy in number. These sallied forth, as they made their escape one after another, mingling their yells, and frantic gestures with the shouts of the multitude. Many of them stripped of their prison clothes as they went, and were met by their friends and associates who never expected to see them come forth, except for trial or punishment. One of the ringleaders then tied a black handkerchief to the weather-cock on the top of the porter's lodge: this man was an infidel, and it was a fit job for him. At this signal the incendiaries began their work. Thick black clouds of smoke arose from the

vast pile of building; the treadmill, the governor's house, the chapel were quickly on fire, and the strong fireproof walls of the prison, constructed of stone and iron, were blackened by the flames, which strove to spread themselves, but were checked on either side by these impenetrable barriers: the mob burnt the chairs, benches, tables, and every destructible thing within the prison.

The rioters now felt themselves to be masters of the city, and openly avowed their intention of burning and plundering private property. Some of the leaders of the Political Union, whose placard had tended to raise the storm, offered their services to quell it, but the mob were masters now, and refused to obey. A member of the Union proposed a plan which seemed feasible: the gaol stands on a piece of ground surrounded on one side by the floating harbour, on the other by the new river. The only approach to it is by two swing bridges: it was proposed to turn the bridges round, and confine the mob on what would then have been an island. The plan was not adopted.

It is said that the ringleaders seated themselves in the court-yard of the prison, to deliberate as to the places to be attacked; various schemes were brought forward; at length they sallied forth in several parties and burnt four toll-houses: the gate keepers were allowed to remove their property. The oil for lighting the lamps was then poured on the floor and mixed with other combustible matter; which being lighted up, the house was instantly in a blaze. A ringleader directed the operations with impudent coolness.

The Gloucester County Prison, near to Bristol, shared the same fate, and a party was dispatched to burnth Bridewell, which had been only partially consumed. The three prisons, blazing in different quarters of the city at the same moment, served as terrible warnings to warn the inhabitants of their danger. From street to street and house to house the rumour spread with fearful consternation. The magistrates had been at the Council-house, and a party of citi-

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zens had assembled at the Guildhall, but no adequate civil force was organized. The town was now at the mercy of a lawless rabble, increased by the bands of thieves and robbers, who had just issued from their cells in all the insolence of successful villainy. When good men undertake a good object they endeavour to unite in it, the honest, the upright, the liberal, and the benevolent. What must the men be and what their object, who to procure agents and associates, empty the common gaols.

From the Gloucester County Prison, at Lawford's Gate, the mob proceeded, in two divisions, to the Bishop's Palace, and, the mayor, with several persons who had been with him during the day, and followed by as many citizens as could be collected, went down to the scene of action, having given orders for all the troops which could be brought out to be there. The first division of the mob having entered, were followed by many of the special constables and the soldiers, who formed inside the court, and it was hoped the ringleaders might be secured; but just as the citizens came in contact with them, the main body of the mob was heard advancing. The mayor, and the few persons who were with him between the two bodies, with difficulty passed through them; and the constables, who had attempted to secure some of the mob, on looking to the place where the soldiers had been posted, in the hope of finding support, observed that the soldiers were gone, and finding themselves deserted, got away as they could, declaring that they would not again venture their lives.

The handful of troops on arriving at the Bishop's Palace, perceived by the flames now bursting from the Mansion house, that advantage had been taken of their absence, to set it on fire. The soldiers immediately returned to their former post, and the Bishop's Palace being likewise left unprotected, it was fired by a small party of the mob, and consumed. The Bishop had quitted it during the day, and part of his property had been removed.

No sooner had the troops been withdrawn from

the Mansion-house then the rioters kindled a fire in the kitchen beneath the banquetting-room. The upper rooms were then ransacked and plundered of what ever property remained, and the cellars were again forced open. The plate and valuable pictures had been conveyed to a place of safety. The fire spread with great rapidity, but to hasten its progress, the incendiaries applied firebrands to the several rooms, and while the furious element was spreading in every direction, the wretches ran to the windows shouting in the phrenzy of intoxication and of triumphant wickedness. Some retreated in time, but others there is no doubt, had prepared their own dreadful funeral pile and perished there. So speedy was the work of destruction, that in half an hour the Mansion-house was a smoking ruin.*

The first movements of sedition just visible in the tumultuous assembling of the people on Saturday morning, had now arisen to a terrible height. The rioters had spurned the authority of the King, and of the laws, by insult and violence to the person and property of their Magistrate and Judge; and then proceeded to wreak their imaginary wrongs with unbridled cruelty and violence upon a Bishop, in whom they were bound not only to reverence the office,

* To make what follows more plain to you, I shall here give some short description of Queen Square. Each side of the square, was 150 yards in length or thereabouts, and contained about 20 large and well built houses. The boundary line of this noble square within the building, was therefore 600 or 700 yards. The Mansion house stood at the north east corner, on the north side; The Custom house in the middle of the same side; the Excise office at the northwest corner on the west side. The remainder of the square consisted of private dwelling houses and counting houses, and the cellars underneath, and warehouses behind were large stores of wine, spirits, sugar, cocoa, and other merchandize. Prince's street is immediately behind the west side of the square, and the wooden drawbridge at the end of that street, (which had two toll houses that were burnt down) leads directly to the Gaol. Behind the north and west sides of the square, are quays where ships of a large class were moored. A double row of tall trees and a low wooden paling encloses the middle space which is in grass. There is a statue of King William on horseback in the centre.

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but to love and respect the individual for his chari-
ties, his generosity, his zealous and devoted labours
to promote the temporal and eternal interests of the
people.

Of all the outrages, that in which the rioters seemed
to glory most was the liberation of the prisoners. —
“ Sir Charles Wetherell has come to try the prison-
ers. Well, we shall save him the trouble, and make
Gaol Deliver yourselves!” This was their villainous
boast, and it was quite according to their wild no-
tions of liberty.

The political incendiary wishes “ there was no ne-
cessity for any laws whatsoever.” If he would speak
out, he wishes there *were no laws* whatever. But
since folly and wickedness abound, laws are abso-
lutely necessary to restrain the wicked and protect
those that do well.

True practical liberty, (the wild *would-be* liberty
of the levellers, it were easy to show, is slavery of the
worst description) — true practical liberty consists in
the preservation of every man’s person, and property,
and life from injury and violence. Whoever obeys
the law is protected by it, and enjoys under a good
government, as much freedom as is good for him. —
Now to afford this protection to the innocent, the
law must punish the guilty. No man ought to be
free to commit crimes. That is *licentiousness*. The
wild cry about liberty and equality comes from men
who wish to be licentious — to be free from the con-
troul of government and the law, and although they
transgress, to go unpunished. Under such a system
the lives and property of every honest man would be
at the mercy of rogues. So essential are the prisons
with their bolts and bars, and fetters, when used ac-
cording to law, to the preservation of our liberties.

After *Steady* and *Tidy* have done a hard day’s
work at the plough, it is pleasant to see the happy
beasts turned loose from yoke and collar, shaking
their sleeky sides and rolling their clumsy gambols.
But if a caravan of wild beasts were mischievously
let loose in a crowded fair, should we have any such

pleasant feelings? and would a ducking in the horse pond be punishment enough for the scoundrel who had wantonly exposed man, woman and child, to be torn by the teeth and claws of these beasts of prey? Thieves, robbers, and murderers, are beasts of prey, idle and dangerous. They are safe no where but in prison, and whoever turns them out on society, is responsible for the crimes they commit. Besides, there can scarcely be a more flagrant breach of the law, or of the *liberty* of the subject. "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just even they both are an abomination to the Lord."—Jerusalem, the guilty city that killed the prophets, and stoned them that were sent to her, filled up the measure of her crimes, when her people called on their rulers to shed the most precious and innocent blood, and to release unto them Barabbas, a noted robber, and seditious person.

The alarming report had now spread that the mob had been increased by a strong band of miscreants whose trade is plunder, and who are accustomed to consider property only as a thing to be stolen.—Thieves become selfish, mean, and cowardly from continual fear, but insolently bold and merciless at an hour like this, when the civil authorities were powerless; and prisons and the gallows were no longer objects of terror. "What are we to expect from these outlaws?" "What dreadful excesses will they not commit?" "Since the rioters have broken open the gaols and added those desperadoes to their number, what else can resist them?" "What will they burn next?" These and such like questions were anxiously and fearfully put. As the greater part of the troops had been sent away, it was rightly supposed that the mob met with no resistance from soldiers or constables. What could private individuals do? Night had now closed in upon us. Six fires were now blazing in different quarters of the city, and there were many long hours before day break; nor could any one conjecture what further devastation and horrible excesses might be committed

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or what help would come on the morrow. All plans of combination for mutual defence were abandoned in the general panic, and the prevailing feeling was, "*saue qui peut*" let him who can, save himself!—Reports were every where flying as to the designs of the rioters, which they made no secret of; but on the contrary, to strike additional terror, their emissaries carried about threatening messages; many false alarms were given maliciously, and not a few originated in the well meant anxiety of friends, fearing what might happen to persons in any way distinguished, or obnoxious to the *then* masters of the city. In every quarter, therefore, the rioters were expected, and people set themselves about preparing to defend their premises, (in most cases a hopeless undertaking) or to remove their wives or children, and property, to places of greater security. The rusty sword and pistol were taken down, the doors and windows were barricaded, and more novel and ingenious contrivances were adopted for defence. The proprietors of several manufactories got their large boilers in readiness to pour down a scalding torrent of water on the assailants. In all directions people were carrying through the streets their money, deeds, account-books, and other valuables, with suspicious looks and anxious hasty steps.

It was now plain enough that neither public nor private property, neither high nor low, rich nor poor, would be spared. When the torch of sedition has fired the palace, the flames soon spread to the cottage.—The Peer and the Peasant, the Magistrate and the private citizen, are fellow sufferers in the common ruin. After the Mansion House had been destroyed, the rioters began their attack upon the dwelling houses next to it, by forcing open the doors, breaking the windows, throwing out the furniture and valuables into the street, and then burning the houses one after another. Books, looking-glasses, and furniture, that could not be easily carried away, were wantonly destroyed. About midnight all the houses between the Mansion-house and Costom-house, with the stables

and warehouses behind them, were blazing; and thus the Sabbath closed.

A party of rioters who had forced their way into the Custom-house, were ransacking the rooms; and others who had seated themselves with astonishing hardihood, at a table in the kitchen, to eat and drink while the building was burning over their heads, were aroused by the flames bursting in upon them. Terror-struck they fled from the fiery message of death, but it is believed that very few escaped. Some were scorched and smothered within the walls, while others leaped from the roof and windows and fell on the pavement lifeless or stunned with bruises of which they soon died. A still more dreadful fate befel those who dropped on the portico after the lead which covered it had begun to melt, and being fixed there, suffered a lingering painful death, exhibiting an awful spectacle to their wicked associates. But not even the agonies and helpless cries of their fellow criminals, as they fell into the snare prepared by themselves, and perished in the flames they had kindled, could stop the rioters in their mad and perilous course. There they might have paused, for a street called the Middle Avenue, separated the Custom-house and the burning mass of buildings to the East of it, from the remaining section of the North side of the square which was yet untouched: but the rioters crossed the street and pursued their course westward, carrying fire and destruction from house to house, like the track of a burning torrent of burning lava. The inhabitants were summoned to leave their houses, which were instantly plundered and burned with the same indiscriminate wanton fury as before. Having thus completely destroyed the north side of the square on which the Mansion-house stood, they attacked the western side, beginning with the Excise Office, and travelled along that line also. But I shall not set down the distressing particulars of how they sacked, and how they burned the several dwelling-houses. Two only were saved in the midst of the western range by the courage and presence of mind of the inhabitants, who

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made a shew of resistance, and doubtless at the time it was not very difficult to make the incendiaries change their course, seeing that their first frenzy had in some degree abated, and they were in undisturbed possession of the square, and indeed of the whole town. Some imps of twelve or fourteen years of age, were particularly busy in spreading the flames. Several of them were seen making their escape from a burning house along the roof, and they instantly set fire to a bed-room of the next house. A large warehouse containing spirits having caught fire, the burning liquid flowed along the street in front of several houses behind the square with a bright livid flame. Some females were much scorched in passing over this fiery stream, but by the timely assistance of several sailors their lives were saved.

Two sides of the square were now in a blaze, with here and there a smoking ruin. Walls, roofs, and rafters were falling in with a momentary crash, followed by clouds of dust and smoke, and bursts of flame, and frantic yells from the dissolute crew, who were holding their midnight revels in the open space in the centre. Here were profligates of both sexes collected from the lowest haunts of infamy; the liberated *gaol-birds*, (birds of prey, birds of night) the bully, the furious and besotted drunkard, the swearer, the profane person. Some were tossing firebrands into the houses, stealing wine and provisions, plate and furniture, and wantonly destroying far more.—Thieves were fearlessly and openly plying their nefarious trade, insulting and robbing the persons whom they had burned out of their houses, and other respectable individuals, who had come to the spot out of curiosity, or with the benevolent wish of helping the sufferers. Some were offering to sell stolen goods to the by-standers, or holding mock auctions. Port, claret, and champagne, were held up for sale at 1d. or 2d. a bottle. A piano-forte, worth £40 or £50 was bought from the thief for a few shillings, and afterwards restored to the owner. Carts and cars filled with beds, tables, chairs, plate, and stolen goods of

every description, were rattling along the pavement to receiving houses in the city and neighbourhood. Others, with characteristic indifference to the future, were faking their miserable enjoyment of the present hour. Seated in companies on the grass, they greedily devoured the provisions they had stolen, and quaffed the wines which were handed about in great profusion. Men, women and boys, were seen knocking off the necks of the bottles and swallowing the liquors, till they fell senseless. To many it was their last horrid meal. Death was in the cup of drunkenness, and the swift sword of the avenger was soon to pierce them through, and the fires which lighted up their feast were to be their funeral pile. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die.' The midnight assembly, with its glittering throng, and the sound of the viols and the dancing, has VANITY, VANITY, written upon it; nor can any mind that has strongly realized by faith the glorious and solemn realities of an eternal world, the judgment day—the infinite blessedness of the redeemed, and the ceaseless torments of the ruined soul, ever take delight in spending the winged hours of a short life in such giddy scenes. The man who is striving earnestly to enter into the heavenly city—the man who has beheld 'the king in his beauty,' will not loiter at play with the painted toys and trifles of the world. To him whose objects, desires, and tastes are holy and heavenly, such pastimes appear folly; to him they would be sin. And although he may not censure his brother or sister for lingering on such doubtful, and dangerous ground, he would warn and chide, and strive to win them away from it to wisdom's ways which are indeed pleasantness, and her paths which are all peace. To do more than glance at this subject, is beyond my present purpose, for in the midnight riotous assembly, in Queen-square, the lighter features of vanity and folly were all overspread with the foul ugliness and hideous deformity of sin. Our fallen nature had there sunk to its lowest pitch of degradation. The scene was said to resemble hell. — Such ruffians as were collected there, will be amongst

the *earth-born* inhabitants of the place of torment.— But many *respectable* persons (so called) many of the slaves of fashionable vice and folly, who hated coarseness and low brutality, but had no hatred of sin, will be their companions during that long eternal night of horror. Like those giants in stature and in crime before the flood, they shall grow old in their wickedness and misery together. Oh! who among us shall dwell with them, and with everlasting burnings?

The streets at some distance from the Square, were lonely and deserted; for the inhabitants kept within doors, watching the fate of the burning town with anxious forebodings for themselves and their families and friends. Many sick persons were forced to leave their beds and be carried through the streets. Many an anxious mother hung over her sick child, her heart beating high with fear. Wives who had followed their husbands in thought to the post of duty and of danger, were watching the distant fires all night long with fearful eye. And some brought their babes into the world amid the alarms of this hour of strife and confusion. Thus there were innumerable sufferers throughout the city; and the effect of highly agitated feelings on a feeble frame, and the want of prompt medical assistance, in some cases, proved fatal.

The strongest minded man needed all his patience and energies to bear the sight of the property which he had gained by long and patient industry, perishing by the pitiless hands of the spoiler and incendiary.— But even the prospect of heavy loss and embarrassment, and all the noisy horrors of the tumult and burning, were less appalling to look upon, than the lonely and unprotected streets, where only bands of thieves and other flagitious persons, were wandering about; entering the public houses and demanding liquors, thundering at the doors of private dwellings and calling for money with threats and curses. These things made us shudder to think how the sanctuary of our homes might be invaded, and most of all when duty called us away from them. But God watched.

over us. and made even the wrath of man to praise him; and in mercy restrained the remainder of it.— While a large party of the rioters were attempting to plunder a public house in Castle Street, the Dodding-ton troop of Yeomanry entered the town. The hopes of the inhabitants were raised by their arrival, but after spending two hours in the city without affording any assistance, the troop was on its road homewards again. I shall not stop to inquire who was to blame for their departure at such a time.

The distant view of the fires from Clifton, Bedminster, and the different points of view for several miles around was awfully grand and terrific. The night was dark and cloudy, and rainy betimes. Very mercifully, the wind was low, and the flames were not furiously borne along: but they rose high in spiral wavy columns, and often threw around a shower of brilliant sparks. The thick smoke hung over the city like a broad curtain in massy folds, which glared with a peculiar tinge of dark red, passing into clouds of dun and brown and black, the canopy of a great conflagration. When the fires were at their height, it was as light as day for a range of several miles; and this beacon of sedition conveyed its baleful message as far as to the Welsh mountains. The varied outline of the city, with its numerous spires, the venerable Cathedral, the lofty gothic tower of Redcliff, standing out in bold relief and dark contrast, or else brightly illuminated by a sudden flash or steady blaze; the glowing water, the reflection from the canvass of the ships, and all the varying aspect of the sky, as the flames alternately rose and sunk, or grew pale in the morning light; all these objects formed a scene which it is impossible to paint or to describe as it appeared; but it will never be forgotten by those who beheld it. Withal it was so sudden and so strange, that many as they stood gazing upon it, fancied it was a terrible dream, and could hardly believe their own senses, or think that others would believe the dreadful tale.

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on great and trying occasions, which throw men off their guard, and cast them upon their own resources. Selfishness and cowardice are exposed, and hypocrisy throws off its mask. The generous and the brave display their true nobility of soul; and above all the man of solid and exalted piety finds God to be his refuge and strength; a very present help in trouble; in whom he trusts and is at peace. There were many melancholy exhibitions of human frailty as well as of crime at this time of public danger; but these were beautifully contrasted with opposite examples of fidelity, heroism, generosity, and benevolence among persons in the humbler as well as the higher walks of life, in the weaker as in the stronger sex. There were christians in every condition who can look back to their own feelings at this time, with humble thankfulness in the recollection of them, and who would not wish themselves to have been absent from these dangers, because they never felt so deeply before, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, nor how vain was the help of man,—how all sufficient and full of consolation were the power and faithfulness of their God.

About five o'clock in the morning, the rioters attacked the first house on the south side of the Square belonging to Mr. Claxton. A troop of the 3d draagoon guards appeared at this moment; and under their protection, several gentlemen generously undertook to save the house which had been entered by eleven men, and several women and boys who were plundering it, and were about to set it on fire. A black servant of the proprietor, bravely and faithfully defended his master's property. He felled one of the rioters to the ground, and threw another out of a window; and several more were severely bruised or run through by the soldiers.

Major Mackworth, who had given his valuable services towards arranging and conducting a plan of defence, and after some fruitless attempts to accomplish his object, had agreed to meet at six in the morning with such of the inhabitants as would unite for their mutual protection, came to the square about an

hour after the attack had been made on Mr. Claxton's house, on the south side of it. Immediately behind that line of houses, the shipping was closely moored, and perceiving the probable wide destruction, if the rioters were not instantly checked, he urged an immediate attack upon them. The sole remaining troop of the 3d dragoon guards were quietly patrolling, with Colonel Brereton, the military commander of the district, at their head. They charged the spoil encumbered mob, who made some miserable attempts at resistance by throwing stones, glass bottles, and firing a few shots, one of which wounded a soldier. His sabre was taken by Major Mackworth, who had been without one. "I trust in God," says this officer in his narrative of these events, "that every man then injured was actually engaged in plunder or in burning; and that not a single innocent person there fell beneath our sabres. Numbers were cut down and ridden over; some were driven into the burning houses, out of which they were never seen to return; and our dragoons, after sabering all they could come at in the Square, collected and formed, and then charged down Prince's street and again returned to the square, riding at the miserable mob in all directions; about 120 or 130 of the incendiaries were killed or wounded here." This service accomplished, Major Mackworth rode with all possible speed to Keynsham, about six miles from the Square, whither the squadron of the 14th had been sent the day before. They assembled with the utmost alacrity, and on their way to town, were joined by twelve of the Bedminster yeomanry under their Captain. The destruction of so much private property, and the general insecurity and terror, while the mob were masters, had wrought a wonderful change in the public feeling. The 14th were no longer unpopular, but were every where hailed with joy. They proceeded to Queen square, from which Colonel Brereton had again withdrawn the 3d dragoon guards, and where consequently the mob had begun to re-assemble: the mob were again dispersed.

During the night an express had been sent to Gloucester for an additional force of the 14th dragoons. Capt. Congreve's troop immediately marched to Bristol, and Major Beckwith, the commanding officer, set off with the Adjutant in a post chaise, and arrived at the Council house at seven in the morning, to take the command of the squadron of the 14th that had returned from Keynsham. The first service Major Beckwith had to perform, was to disperse a mob who were plundering the Bishop's Palace.— They defended themselves with stones and broken bottles; but were speedily scattered with considerable bloodshed. Major Beckwith then led his dragoons at a rapid pace to Queen square, whither the mob had returned to pillage and burn other houses. They were charged again, driven along the streets and quays, some leapt into boats, some fled to the public houses; but before they could come forth again to attack the soldiers with stones and bottles, they were followed by dismounted dragoons, and sabred or thrown out of the windows. Numbers who had come from the country, fled along one of the roads, and were pursued and scattered. Patrols were then sent to scour the neighbouring country, and a party of rioters having collected on the Bath road to plunder some houses there, were overtaken by a troop of the 14th dragoons, about four miles from Bristol and dispersed; and several of them were captured and lodged in prison. Thus a swift and terrible punishment was inflicted on the rioters. So soon did they reap the bitter fruits of their crimes. They had transgressed with a high hand. Vengeance had slumbered for a season, but it was now time to make a signal example. They had shewn no pity to their fellow citizens, and it would have been unjust to spare them.

The numbers who died of drunkenness and perished in the burning houses, where they were overtaken and into which they rushed to escape the sword, never more to return, and those who were killed and wounded by the soldiers, have been variously stated. The actual loss of life, and the amount of suffering

will never be known; but all the statements which I have read or heard from military men, estimate the numbers who so perished or suffered at about 500.— I prefer their account of the number for various reasons. The first statement that appeared from a military officer was considerably under this amount; and all others from similar sources, tend to shew that it did not quite come up to the truth. It was coarsely ridiculed, however, as an exaggeration, by persons who judging of others by themselves, imputed motives to the writer, which would have no weight with a gentleman and a christian. The testimony of military men is the best in such cases. In the first place, there were very few unconcerned spectators of these distressing events. The rioters were then panic struck. Respectable people got out of the way as fast as possible. A spectator might see a part. The soldiers, were themselves the actors, and were everywhere. Officers who have seen in many a battle field, and the dead and dying falling around them like autumn leaves, can best tell what is the probable effect of their own operations. But any man of plain understanding may guess what a number of deadly and painful wounds must have been inflicted first by twenty three dragoons, and afterwards by upwards of seventy charging the flying mob in open files with the speed of an arrow, sweeping their sabres right and left, and this wherever the rioters were gathered together, at intervals for several hours. Besides, each soldier can tell pretty correctly how many were struck down by his own hand; and by comparing notes where so few troops were, it is easy to come at the truth. That old soldiers who fought on the heights of Albuera or the plains of Waterloo, where

“every turf beneath their feet,
Should be a soldier's sepulchre,”

would make a vain-glorious boast of driving away an unarmed mob in Queen square, I shall not readily believe. The brave man goes to such a revolting task only from a strong and painful sense of duty. They must have felt a just indignation, indeed, at the waste-

ful destruction of property, and the provoking insults with which their patience had been tried. But, here there could be none of these natural feelings of gallantry, which compensated the horrors of war. The sword that leaps from its scabbard to defend their fellow countrymen, is drawn forth with reluctance to prevent and punish their crimes; and the brave man returns it unhonoured, when compelled to be their executioner.

The hospital reports, it has been alleged, do not correspond with so great an extent of carnage. The hospital returns give about one hundred cases of all kinds; but no one can tell how many perished by fire, how many were killed in the square and their bodies removed; for the friends and associates of those killed, did so immediately. The hospital patients were guarded as felons, and none therefore would be taken to the hospitals whose friends would take them home; and for their own sakes they were glad to avoid the public disgrace and trouble that would be brought upon them by having a relation killed or wounded in a riot. There cannot be a reasonable doubt, therefore, that many cases of trifling wounds and many severe and dangerous ones, were never brought to the hospitals. I have dwelt upon this point, because it has been much disputed; and it is important that the truth should be known. I should wrong my country, by affecting to conceal or diminish the truth for the great end of punishment is to deter from similar crimes.

Various anecdotes are related of the manner in which some of the rioters perished. One man had his head severed from his body by a single blow of a sabre. Several were pierced through. Two soldiers were ordered to mark a rioter, who had been very riotous and insolent. He got up into a tree out of their reach, and there they left him in bodily fear till released by an officer who would not have him cut down in cold blood. A case unusually dreadful occurred in digging out the ruins in the Square after the riots were over. A man who had drunk himself into

a state of insensibility in one of the vaults was entombed there, and scorched by the flames. When found, he was alive, but his arms were burnt to stumps and he looked more like the leafless withered trunk of an oak scathed by lightning than a human being. I cannot tell whether he is still in existence; an awful living monument of his own guilt and the horrors of those three memorable days.

The service of the officer and soldiers who did their duty in suppressing the riots, were acknowledged in the following letter of thanks from Lord Hill:—

"I am in the first place to observe, that it is peculiarly gratifying to Lord Hill, to reflect that it has fallen to the lot of an officer of his personal staff to take the lead in the execution of a service so creditable in all respects.

"The ardour and zeal which prompted Major Mackworth to tender his valuable assistance to the chief magistrate of Bristol at so perilous and critical a moment, naturally point out that officer as the first object of his Lordship's commendation.

"It clearly appears, that during the progress of those frightful outrages, which were committed in his presence, Major Mackworth's judgment and personal firmness were alike conspicuous and useful; and Lord Hill cordially congratulates the Major upon the strong and unqualified testimony which the mayor of Bristol bears to the utility of his services in the accompanying letter, as well as in the resolution also herewith transmitted for your perusal.

"Capt. Gage of the 14th Light Dragoons, and Cornet Kelson of the 3d Dragoon Guards, are stated to Lord Hill to have conducted themselves admirably in the discharge of the delicate and difficult duties assigned to them respectively on the two first mentioned days; and Lord Hill desires that they may be informed that his Lordship will retain a faithful recollection of their conduct.

"You will be pleased to convey a similar intimation to the non-commissioned officers and soldiers of the two detachments in question, with reference to their own steady, and altogether excellent conduct whilst thus employed in aid of the civil authorities of their country.

"Although Lord Hill makes Major Beckwith, of the 14th Light Dragoons the last object of his commendation as regards the officers of the line, he may be assured that his Lordship does so merely for the sake of regularity, as the Major's arrival at Bristol took place on the third day of the riots—and by no means from any feeling that his services were less important than those of the other individuals herein mentioned.

"Lord Hill has abundant evidence now before him of the promptitude and success with which Major Beckwith employed

the military means entrusted to his conduct on Monday, the 31st ult. and therefore has the greatest satisfaction in thus recording his highest approbation of the measures adopted by this officer on that day."

Letters of thanks were also addressed by the magistrates of Bristol, to Major Mackworth and Major Beckwith, strongly expressing their grateful sense of the zealous and energetic assistance afforded by these officers. The riots were now quelled effectually:—the troops had acted with decisive energy, and the citizens were at length roused to take measures for the protection of the town. A numerous body of constables armed with fowling pieces, pistols, swords and staves, were speedily organized, which would have been of still greater service, had it been as available on the day of danger, as the day after. At six o'clock on Monday morning, a dispatch from the magistrates had reached Lieut. Col. Love, commanding the reserve companies of the 11th Foot at Cardiff.—The Colonel immediately marched his men to Newport, and seized a steamboat, which the mob there, in co-operation with their confederates at Bristol, tried to prevent him from using as a transport. It was no easy matter however to resist soldiers; the troops soon embarked, and by rapid marching, Colonel Love arrived in Bristol with two hundred men, at six o'clock the same evening. As he entered Park Street with drums and music, ladies and gentlemen flocked to the doors and windows, and greeted his arrival with the warmest welcome. Monday night, however, was not without its alarms, especially in the remote parts of the city, and in its neighbourhood, where the ample preparations for defence were imperfectly known. This was increased by an oil warehouse in Queen Square having caught fire; and by the frequent firing during the night from the ships moored in the middle of the river, to intimidate the rioters. It was singular that at such a time there should have been a partial illumination, the inhabitants having put lights in their windows by order of the magistrates, lest the mob should put out the lamps.

On Tuesday morning, the shops and public offices were open again, it being known that every necessary precaution had been taken to preserve tranquillity within the town, and to prevent the entrance of bands of rioters, from the country, by troops stationed at the outposts. Reinforcements of infantry and yeomanry had already reached the city, a brigade of artillery from Woolwich, and troops from other quarters, had marched upon it. Crowds of well dressed spectators now ventured forth to look at the ruins. In the square upwards of forty houses, public offices, and warehouses were burnt to the ground, save here and there a few pillars and tottering walls standing above the heaps of smoking rubbish. The mutilated remains of several of the sufferers were dug from the ruins, all of whom are believed to have been rioters. Soldiers and constables were parading the streets and entering houses where stolen property was suspected to be concealed. Plate and furniture to a considerable amount was recovered, a great part of it, much to the disgrace of families who would not have been supposed likely to be guilty of sharing the plunder. The stolen goods were carried into the Exchange; and in a few days, the space under the piazzas in the large quadrangle, was filled with confused heaps, from which the sorrowing owners sought out the broken and injured remains of their property. A great deal was voluntarily restored, and not a little destroyed, to escape detection. Scarcely any part of the wine and spirit stores were recovered; three hundred dozen of wine had been wasted and carried off from the cellars of the Mansion House, and a still larger quantity from those of one of the wine merchants, who were plundered. Only a vague idea can be formed of the value of the property destroyed.— On the most moderate computation, it was between £100,000 and £200,000. But the actual loss in buildings, furniture and other articles was, perhaps, the least part of the injury. For several days, all business was completely at a stand, and a stagnation of trade followed, which continues to this hour; and the

effects of which will be felt for a long time to come. When the labouring man is thrown out of work for several days, he feels it sharply when he comes to pay his week's rent, and all his other outgoings with his scanty earnings. What must the effect be when such a visitation falls heavily on a whole community; when the merchant and shopkeeper, as well as the journeyman and day-labourer are all idle, or nearly so, for days and weeks together? Persons of large capital must reduce their expenses and establishments; those of moderate income, are put to straits and difficulties; but the heaviest burden falls upon the labouring classes, and the poor, who seldom provide for a rainy day, if they had formerly little to spare, are reduced in a time of public distress to absolute want. When the wealthier classes are obliged to draw in their capital and lessen their expenses, the demand for work, and the wages of labour, are proportionally low, and the labouring man must suffer accordingly. Where this is caused by bad crops and a depressed state of trade, we look for better times to mend matters. But here there was an additional cause of distress, which so long as the feeling lasts, must act as a dead weight and an effectual damper to all spirited enterprise and employment of capital: I mean the *insecurity of property*. One great cause of the prosperity of our country in times past, has been the security of every man's property under our admirable laws and constitution; a security far greater than other nations enjoy. But if the farmer's corn-ricks, the merchant's warehouse, and the tradesman's shop and stock in trade, are now-a-days to be burned and plundered, who will have the spirit to carry on business, and to set about any new undertaking? The man of capital will confine his purchases, and contract his dealings within the narrowest possible limits till he can extend them with safety.—Men of property suffer in the first instance it's true, but the labouring classes must suffer in the end, and that more severely. And this is the point to which political incendiaries are striving to bring the country! This is what the people bring upon themselves

when they attempt to put in practice the doctrines and advice, put forth in their inflammatory speeches and seditious prints.

Besides the insecurity of property, these outrages produce an *unnatural separation* between the classes who have acquired property, and those who are supported by daily labour. Many, many, in our free country have risen by their industry from the labouring class into the other—nay, to the very highest stations. The two classes are naturally dependent on each other; the lower more especially on the higher, and they ought to be united together as brethren and fellow citizens. The arm of power *can* enforce obedience to the laws, and whatever unprincipled agitators and political scribblers may prate and write about “physical forces” and the “power of might against right,” we have to bless God that those who have been foolish enough to be duped by them, and mad enough to make the experiment, have ever been found in our day, immeasurably the weaker party. *Great are truth and justice and they will prevail*; and on any serious attempt being made to overthrow these pillars of the Constitution, such a host of strength will rise up in their defence as must speedily and effectually crush the rash assailants. The guardians and possessors of property may be taken by surprise, but the country must be revolutionized indeed, and corrupted with the leaven of infidelity and sedition to an extent hitherto unknown, before they will suffer their just and indefeasible rights, to be wrested from them, by traitors to the common weal. But though the law *can* and *will* protect property, and enforce the relative duties connected with it, there are other duties not less binding and vastly important to the general welfare, which no human laws have power to enforce. The good will which ought to subsist between man and man; condescension, forbearance and liberality from superiors to inferiors in station on one hand; and on the other—respect, dutiful obedience, and gratitude for favours conferred. These have their seat in the heart and affections, and are to be judged of by the enlightened conscience and the Bible.

If these duties are generally well performed, the movements of society go on in delightful quiet and harmony ; and appeals to the law are unfrequent, and unnecessary : if they are violated, all is trouble and discord, and society can only be kept together by coercion. As in a private family ; so is it in the great family of the nation. When the husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, observe their respective duties, there is peace and happiness ; but when the children usurp authority, and the servants disobey, nothing is done without the rod, and the frown, there is perpetual jarring and turmoil. So, likewise, when the King and all in authority under him, are treated by the people with gross disrespect, the persons and property of public officers with wanton outrage, there is neither public happiness nor prosperity. The *tendency* of such a state of things is to alienate and separate the higher from the lower classes ; to throw back their kindness, to dry up their charities, and to confine their sympathies to persons in their own station. This is its natural *tendency* ; that such has not been its *effect* to any great extent among us, I am happy to believe ; for while many, from their losses in consequence of the destruction of so much property, have been unable to give to the same extent as formerly, while Colston's anniversary could not be celebrated on account of the public calamities, and the large subscriptions that used to be collected there were in a measure lost to the poor, yet the fires in Queen-Square had scarcely burnt out, before large sums were raised for the relief of the poor, on the dreaded approach of the pestilence. In this respect the wealthier classes have acted with becoming generosity.

The riots have further *disgraced* our city, so disgraced it that some have left it to reside elsewhere, and others who would have settled here, have staid away. The riots have brought shame and trouble into many families, formerly of good reputation and in comfortable circumstances. Many on the day they were tempted by bad example, and the hope of concealment, to partake of the plunder ; many have lost their rela-

tions in circumstances of dishonour, and been obliged to maintain them while disabled from work, and suffering from painful wounds.

And what have the chief actors in this doleful tragedy gained by all this wasteful ruin and pillage, and the long train of public and private calamities they have brought upon us? At how costly a price have they purchased to themselves as well as to others, their night of unbridled licentiousness, and their pittance of miserable booty. Let the dreadful fates of those who perished by fire and fell by the edge of the sword declare it, "the wages of sin to them was death;" but the last awful scene is hastening on to a close.—Five ringleaders of the mob have already been doomed to pay the penalty of their crimes; nineteen others "to pass the remainder of their lives in a foreign land, separated for ever from parents, relations, and friends, and in a state of severe labour and constant privation:" and many more will have to linger out the weary hours in the prison-dungeons they had hoped to destroy.

There were among them men who had property and some influence, which they might have increased and exerted for the happiness of other men, who might have lived and died useful, respected, and beloved.—But they had not the fear and the love of God in their hearts. Impelled by pride and selfishness, and their own unruly lusts, they rushed on to rebellion, against the laws of God and their country, leading others along with them to an ignominious end. Great was their braggart boldness then, nor had it left them altogether on the day of trial, while hope remained; but when the fatal verdict had been pronounced, when they stood convicted and in despair at the solemn judgment seat, what quivering of the lips, what paleness, what tottering limbs, what piteous wailings, what cries for mercy! These were among the boastful leaders, but now, how condemned and crest-fallen. Unhappy men! And is an earthly tribunal and the face of man arrayed in the stern attributes of justice, so terrible to the guilty soul? These are but the

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beginning of woes, unless there follows repentance deep, cordial, and sincere, which shall lay hold on that long-suffering mercy, which is extended even to the eleventh hour. But it is the melancholy experience and testimony of those who have the best means of judging, that the compunctious visitings of persons who have delayed repentance till they come to a death-bed or the prison-cell, are for the most part only the effect of fear, that they are not the Godly sorrow that worketh repentance not to be repented of ; not that true change of heart which would certainly produce a holy life ; for of such instances where the life that seemed lost past recovery, has afterwards been spared, there are few, very few that have not quickly cast away all signs of contrition and returned again to their evil ways. May these unhappy men be led to sorrow after a Godly sort, and to find mercy. There are some that have escaped detection and a miserable end, who were the guilty associates of the convicts. Their period for repentance may be lengthened out. " Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." Let all wrath, strife, seditions, murders, drunkenness, and revellings, be put away.

But think you that the men who have suffered and have yet to suffer were sinners above all that dwell among us ? As their judge stated in his impressive address, " each of them was a striking and awful example to others, of the crimes which men commit, and the misery which inevitably follows it, when they throw off the restraint of the laws of God and man, and give themselves up to their own unbridled passions !" But many who have not proceeded to such open excesses have the same need of repentance ; which of us needs it not, for himself and the whole community ? What irreligion, profaneness, sabbath-breaking, and low debauchery, openly prevail amongst us ! How many heinous sins are committed that are hidden from men, but revealed to Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, but with abhorrence. How many sins

have been committed in hardness of heart, in wilful ignorance, and unbelief. How many in the full enjoyment of gospel light and privileges. And shall not God visit us for these things? "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

The rioters brought down destruction and punishment on their own heads, and the guilt was theirs; but the calamity was sent and permitted as a warning and chastisement from God to each of us and to our city; as such let us regard it. "From whence come wars and fightings among you, come they not hence even of your lusts, that war in your members?" (James iv. 1.) Yet war is one of God's scourges; and civil war a scourge more unnatural and terrible than foreign war. Though man was the immediate agent in these tumults, the chastisement came from God, as truly as does the pestilence which has spread its ravages abroad, and falls as yet, with a lighter rod on our own highly favoured, but sinful nation. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?"

In the midst of the judgment, we have experienced many special mercies and providences. We marvel alike at the extent of the calamity—and that it was not far greater. Lives were saved from the fury of the mob in the most critical circumstances. All the means of defence were withdrawn or rendered useless for a season, and restored just in time to prevent greater devastation. The counsels of the civil and military authorities were frustrated, but so were those of the rioters, and they seemed to be spell-bound to a single spot, instead of spreading confusion and ruin every where. A list of houses to be attacked was found on one of them, and the dock gates were to have been destroyed, by which the heavily laden vessels would have been stranded, and burst asunder: these and other premeditated evils were averted. The rough wind was mercifully stayed, and the raging flames made slow progress. Let us remember these things with gratitude.

It is a general and correct opinion that the nation at large has benefited by our loss. The tumults at

Bristol have sounded an alarm through the length and breadth of the land. The sudden springing of the mine in a quarter where it was not expected, has probably saved us from a more terrific explosion, and sent us to watch more narrowly the secret machinations of our enemies. The warning, and the lesson will be thrown away unless we learn from this frightful exhibition of the theories and principles of infidel and revolutionary incendiaries, to detest, and spurn them away from us, and to value as we ought, the inestimable privileges of the laws and constitution they seek to destroy.

J. N.



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